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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 001410

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IT](#)
SUBJECT: ITALY: GIORGIO NAPOLITANO ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC

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Classified By: Pol M/C David D. Pearce, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) Senator for Life Giorgio Napolitano May 10 was elected Italy's 11th President of the Republic by a simple majority in the fourth round of voting. The center-right opposition, led by caretaker PM Silvio Berlusconi, did not support Napolitano's candidacy. Two of Berlusconi's coalition allies called that decision a mistake, but followed suit for the sake of coalition unity. Soon after Napolitano's election, center-left leader Romano Prodi announced he expected to form a government by May 17 and receive a final vote of confidence from both houses by May 123. Napolitano is the first former communist elected President of the Republic of Italy. He was always considered a moderate and was the first to break with Italy's communist party in 1989. END SUMMARY.

NAPOLITANO ELECTED IN FOURTH VOTE

12. (SBU) Senator for Life Giorgio Napolitano May 10 was elected Italy's 11th President of the Republic in the fourth round of voting. He received 543 of 990 votes and was elected by simple majority and without the hoped for support of the center-right (CR) opposition. Berlusconi's CR coalition nearly split over Napolitano's nomination. Several leaders of CR coalition partner Union of Christian Democrats of the Center (UDC) called PM Silvio Berlusconi's decision not to support Napolitano a significant error and the National Alliance (AN) also leaned toward supporting Napolitano. However, the Northern League's (Lega) Umberto Bossi threatened to leave the CR coalition if it supported Napolitano's candidacy. As a result, members of the UDC and AN publicly turned in blank ballots, expressed respect for Napolitano and said they did not vote for him for the sake of coalition unity.

NOT AMATO AND NOT D'ALEMA

13. (C) Early favorites to win the election for the Presidency included former Prime Ministers from the Democrats of the Left (DS) Giulio Amato and Massimo D'Alema. Amato was rumored to be Romano Prodi's original candidate, but the DS flexed its muscles and forced Prodi to propose their party president and the center-left's (CL) strongest politician, D'Alema. D'Alema faced strong public opposition from

Berlusconi and the CR. Forza Italia (FI) and Lega contacts recently told Poloff, however, that both of their parties actually favored D'Alema as president but could not figure out how to explain that to their electorate. For them, D'Alema would have been a strong interlocutor on the left, something which they do not consider Prodi to be. A newly elected Lega member of parliament said Amato would have been the worst scenario for them. He called Amato a leftist who appears to be institutional, but who would clearly have favored the CL. He said they were happy with Napolitano's election since he is also clearly a DS politician--and clearly seen as such by most Italians. The FI campaign official said with the CL controlling all the government institutions, "we can blame everything on them." Both officials said their parties will continue to do everything possible to make Prodi's government fall as soon as possible.

(Note: When asked if they thought Berlusconi would use foreign policy issues to bring down a Prodi government, both said no. In separate conversations, they both said the CR would use foreign policy to show inconsistencies in the CL coalition, but that their parties would respect previous commitments and lend their support in parliament on, for example, the vote to fund Italy's Iraq mission. End Note.)

TIMELINE ON GOVERNMENT FORMATION

¶4. (U) Current President Ciampi announced he will resign May 15, and Napolitano's swearing-in also has been scheduled for May 15. Prodi announced that he expects to be given the mandate to form a government May 16/17; to quickly receive acceptance by Napolitano of his government list; to pass a vote of confidence in the Senate on May 19; and to receive a final vote of confidence from the Chamber of Deputies on May 22/23.

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BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

¶5. (U) Giorgio Napolitano is a veteran politician who earned his political stripes early with his active opposition to Nazi troops during World War II. In 1942, he founded an anti-fascist and Communist group that took part in the resistance to Fascism. In 1945, Napolitano joined the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and was first elected to Parliament in 1953 under its banner. He has told the media that he joined the PCI more as a response to Fascism and military occupation than an ideological affinity to Communism. He rose through PCI ranks, eventually becoming a member of its National Committee and one of the party's most influential members. His special focus in party politics was policy toward southern Italy, taking part in initiatives to help spark a renaissance of the south. For a time he managed the PCI's economic policy, later focusing on foreign policy.

¶6. (U) Napolitano's political views were among the more conservative within the PCI in the early years. He told journalists decades later that he was uninterested in stooping to the demagoguery of the times. He maintains he was being true to himself. Napolitano abruptly resigned from the PCI in 1989 saying that the party needed serious reform to reflect global realities and to bring it closer to European social democracy. In this regard, he was instrumental in hastening the PCI's eventual demise in 1991 with the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Napolitano joined other like-minded former Communists--like Massimo D'Alema--in establishing the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), the predecessor to Democrats of the Left (DS). In the nascent PDS, Napolitano found a home for his political ideals. He was an important leader of the PDS and helped shape the new party into a serious contender in Italian politics. He took a brief hiatus from active domestic

politics, running successfully for a seat in the European Parliament from 1989 to 1992. During his stint there, he served on committees dealing with the Union's constitutional, institutional, and political affairs.

¶7. (U) Returning to Italy, Napolitano was elected President of the Chamber of Deputies (1992-94) under the Socialist government of Giuliano Amato and the technical government of Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. During his tenure in parliament, Napolitano has served in the Foreign Affairs Committee, was a member of Italy's NATO delegation, and presided over the Special Commission for the Reorganization of Radio and Television. He returned to the cabinet in 1996, under Romano Prodi's first government, to serve as Minister of the Interior (1996-98). With the collapse of Prodi's government in 1998, Napolitano returned to the European Parliament from 1999 to 2004. In 2005, President Ciampi named Napolitano Senator For Life, a distinction reserved only for Italians who have either served as President of the Republic or who have performed an extraordinary service to the nation. (There are currently only seven such Senators.)

¶8. (U) Napolitano earned a law degree in 1942 from the University of Naples. He was born June 29, 1925 in Naples. SPOGLI